

## 2007 Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbis

by: Miriam Eljas | Jul 1 2007

Armed with gifts of brand new shofars as they spread throughout America and beyond, this year's Yeshivat Chovevei Torah graduates are as diverse as they are unusual. The enthusiastic new rabbis began the semikha ceremony June 10, 2007, by singing and dancing their way into the auditorium in celebration. With but 9 graduates, including the son of the chief rabbi of Romania, these rabbis come primed with strong halachic backgrounds, innovative approaches to leading congregations and a celebration of individuality.



Two of the new rabbis, David Kasher and Elliot Kaplowitz, both 2007 S. Daniel Abraham Semikha Fellows, were selected on behalf of their fellow classmates to address the hundreds assembled for the occasion in Manhattan and drew standing ovations from the crowd, including community leaders, fellow rabbis and family.

Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Dov Linzer also spoke to the crowd, and noted the integral role that community service and social action play in education. “The best education takes place outside the four walls of the beit midrash,” said Rabbi Linzer, speaking of the rabbinic mission to El Salvador sponsored by the American Jewish World Service, in which several Chovevei students participated. “As new rabbis you are now about to bring our distinctive Torah to the Jewish people... You leave knowing that your goal as students and teachers is to teach a process of Torah. You will teach others and learn from them. It is about what the Torah has to say, but also about the discussions as well.”

Founder and Dean Rabbi Avi Weiss addressed the graduates and explained the critical process of not only absorbing knowledge but also of striking out on one's own with

individual ideas.

“Where you fly and how you fly is up to you... students are often unable to make any decision without turning to their rabbi,” said Rabbi Weiss. “This is not the model of Chovevei Torah. To be sure, the rabbis and teachers here at YCT do the best to provide a process of learning critical to your success as a rabbi. But the goal of the master rabbi is to empower, not control. Not to hold on tight, but to let go... Real Torah is to reap from the master’s insight and then to find your own voice. As you celebrate your ordination, consider the imagery of walking out backwards with eyes on YCT, to forever draw from those you love and those that influence you.”